1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1957
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

brother's, and, with the father's senility recognized, the oldest son assumes his place as head of the family; at least he is looked to for guidance by the brothers and sisters. 593

Before circumcision, when a small boy finds a wild bees' nest, the honey of which is a greatly prized delicacy, he goes to tell his father (mari, gawel, and others, too), who will open the hollow tree for the boy and allow him with the aid of his small brothers to eat all of it, but will not eat it himself nor allow any but the brothers to touch it. This rule is very important, for it rests upon a magical idea that the boy will have good luck in the hunt and in later finding large nests. Should a man eat any of the boy's first wild bees' honey, a father would consider this more than sufficient cause to fight him. It is the father who takes the initiative in protecting the small boy's interest. 593 222 858 [777]

When a child, particularly a son, becomes ill, the father either treats him magically or uses native remedies. Should a mother neglect her child, or through misadventure allow it to be harmed, most fathers would become angry and beat her, and in some cases try to kill her. 593 855 152

When a son dies, the actual father and his brothers lead in the mourning ceremonies; when a father dies, all the varieties of sons within the limits of the clan cooperate in leading these ceremonies. When the bones of a man are exhumed after burial, it is the father who opens the grave and, with the help of the son's dué (the father's waku), cleans the putrid flesh off the bones. 764

The death of a son is a great social loss to the father, since there is no one to take his place; but the death of a father is felt less severely by the children. If the children are small, they and their mother pass through the levirate to the father's younger brother. If the children are grown, the father usually has become very old and his death causes them little social loss. The death of a father in our own society creates a greater social maladjustment than in the native society. The Murngin children have been calling the father's brother father, and, further, their behavior toward this younger brother of their father has differed but slightly from that toward their own father. The mother does not go back to her own but continues in the same social group. There is no change in the social adjustment of the children or other members of the kinship system. The personal loss of a father to the family and to society is usually keenly felt, as is the death of sons by a father. When a son dies a father beats his own head and attempts to wound himself to show his sorrow. 768 [152]

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

tribal law, the waku of gawel and the gurrong of mokul would have been the same person; with the wrong marriage a discord is created in the first ascending generation, and sometimes considerable time elapses before a woman is taken in marriage. 582

After marriage a young man usually lives for a short period of varying length with his parents-in-law. After this he may go to his own people and take his wife with him. There is often much protest by the wife when she leaves her parents, but they aid her husband. When a child is born, its parents, if not already with the wife's parents, return there so the grandparents can see the baby. This is only for the first child, although the parents of both the husband and wife are always pleased and anxious to see all the grandchildren. 591 [574]

When a girl leaves her parents for the first time, a younger brother accompanies her (see page 65), a custom called "olokork." (The sister's husband is also dué to her young brother, just as this younger brother is galle to his sister's dué.) The husband looks out for the younger man and assumes the place of a father to him during his residence there. 591 607

When a child is born the new union is greatly solidified; it now has become a fully developed family, and except for the wife's being stolen by another man there would be little chance of permanent rupture even if she ran away. Tribal sentiment would be against her and her paramour or anyone who might have stolen her. The children would seldom go with her in such a case, and the strong attachment a Murngin mother has for her offspring would force her to come back to them. The writer has recorded several instances of a woman's going through the most difficult privations and risking probable death to return to her children after she had been stolen by a man from another tribe. 851 587 626 [152]

If a camp has been ambushed and the men all killed in a general tribal war, the women and children are taken by the conquerors and given as wives to the men who are in the right relationship to them. 727

A man wants as many wives as he can get and still keep his peace with the other males of his clan. The average is about three and a half for middle-aged men; but there is a recorded case of one native with seventeen wives, the majority having been obtained by stealing them or killing their husbands. He also married "wrong." There is a close correlation of having many wives with fighting strength, or with being the son of a man powerful in war who had thereby acquired a large number of women whose brothers would be gawels to 595 554

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

waku and his clan; (2) the strength of the far-off waku's clan; (3) the near waku's having a number of wives and no younger brothers; and (4) the possibility that the waku may want to go without wives. There are two cases of this last on record. The old men usually try to get a man to marry and marry properly. Not only is their personal pressure felt by a man who does not wish to marry, but the whole impact of society is placed against him in hundreds of direct and indirect ways. It would be a strong man with an intense dislike of women who could retain his bachelorhood against such odds.[12]

The reader may assume from this account of illegal unions that marriage is a very unstable institution. Such is not the case. Although love affairs are common, a lifelong marriage either of a galle mielk to one dué, or to him and his younger brothers through the levirate, is the normal thing. Murngin society could not exist were this not true.

From the cases of unfaithfulness and the mechanical manner of acquiring spouses through the relationship of the parents, conjugal love might appear impossible. Although rare, it does exist. The ideal wife and husband are those who remain faithful to their spouses; on the other hand, a promiscuous woman or man is disapproved of even though not openly condemned.

To illustrate a man's affection for his wife: Mun-yir-yir had had a magically powerful totemic string given him to keep preparatory to its being placed upon another's totemic emblem. No woman may see or even hear of such a thing. His galle was burning bush for bandicoots. The fire burned and destroyed the string. All his clansmen and those of the man to whom the string belonged were extremely angry. Women had been killed before for such an offense. An old man said

[12] Occasionally one hears accounts of a number of unmarried men collecting in a group of five or six, going out into the jungle with one woman and having group sexual relation with her. One woman I knew of had done this several times; the people severely disapproved of her. She seemed a woman of insatiable sexual appetite and was continually in trouble because of it. She also seemed to stimulate all the men sexually and had a greater interest for them than some of the other women who might have been obtained. Sometimes a youth who is having an affair with an older woman will tell his friends and have them accompany him to his assignation. The other men remain back when they arrive. According to one of the accounts given me, the woman says, "Who is with you?" He replies, "My friends." She says, "Do not bring your friends, I only like you, I only want to have you." The boy says, "No, they are my friends. I'll have you first, then they can." She objects, and he says, "But I feel very sorry for them. Maybe if you don't play with them they will come use black magic on you." He keeps on talking like that and the woman listens and agrees to his proposal. There seems to be considerable evidence that what is called nymphomania among modern women also exists among these aboriginal peoples.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

593 688 152 at the time that it was to his clan as though she had killed a strong man. Her husband said nothing, but hurried her to a mission on a nearby island to shield her against possible attacks of his own people. He risked being injured himself for this, but he was more concerned for her. This was not merely because of her economic or child-bearing value. He had an older wife, who had borne him a daughter, whom he loved even more than his younger wife; and the older woman was still a sexual mate and a very able food-gatherer. Yet he told me he would have let them kill the old woman, for she was "rubbish," but that he liked the young galle "too much" and he could not let them kill her.

593 578 837 One further instance may be cited. One of Benaitjimaloi's three wives, the oldest, was notorious for her promiscuity. She had not only been beaten by him, but at one time all the people of a camp had thrashed her for her misconduct. Benaitjimaloi had acquired her by a runaway union. She had been caught in a sexual relation with Bindjerpuma. The husband fought the lover and then said to everybody that he was tired of her continual affairs, was through with her, and that she could go where she pleased. Then he gave her a thorough beating. One of the older men in the tribe, and one of the most intelligent, said, "He won't give her away. I see inside his head. He beat her after he said he'd thrown her away; that shows that he likes that woman too much." Benaitjimaloi kept his wife.

595 484 342 462 A man and all his wives live in the same camp. If he is going on a long journey he usually leaves some of them with their parents, taking only one with him. When a house is to be built the women usually construct the ordinary windbreak type, but sometimes a man helps them. The husband brings in the heavy stringy bark for the small, dome-shaped house used by most of the people during the rainy season. The women keep the house clean. It is felt that the house belongs to the man and the women.

595 578 The wives live in a fair degree of amiability, but there is sometimes jealousy over their husband.

Dorng, a man past middle age, but still very active, had three wives, of whom Opossum was the youngest. He complained one day:

"My wives growl at each other all the time. The two old ones are good friends, but they are jealous of Opossum. They say to her, 'Why don't you get another man? This man is our husband. He made our children come. He belongs to us. He doesn't belong to you.' Opossum says, 'Where am I to go? My other dué are too old; I'd be the same as dead if I lived with

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

one of them.' The two old ones say, 'Your first man is dead already.'" [Dorng's brother died and he got Opossum through the levirate.] His old wives were very pleasant and kind to him, but Opossum was a scold. "When I want to sleep with one of the old sisters at night," he said, "Opossum won't go to sleep as she should. I wait and wait; sometimes morning comes, and that woman watches and won't go to sleep. All right, I wait no longer. I play with her. When I do, Opossum growls at me. The old sisters go to sleep, but sometimes they laugh at me when I play with Opossum."

When Mahkarolla's gawel and mokul gave him their second daughter, the first daughter, who was his wife, immediately quarreled with her younger sister and asked her what right she had to be sleeping with Mahkarolla, who belonged only to her. The first wife said nothing to the husband about her opposition to her sister. When her parents heard of it they said to their older daughter, "She is just the same as you. You are our daughter and she is our daughter. You have him for a husband, and we have given her to him, and now she has him for a husband. She is your young sister; you'll now have someone to look out for the wood for you, and she can help you gather food." This stopped all criticism, and the two sisters lived together as wives to Mahkarolla with the utmost amiability and friendship.

This is the usual situation in Murngin marriage when two sisters from one family marry a man. The older sister has more power than the younger one. Trouble between wives is only likely when he marries into two clans distant from each other.

A wife has considerable independence. She is not the badly treated woman of the older Australian ethnologists' theories. She usually asserts her rights. Women are more vocal than men in Murngin society. Frequently they discipline their husbands by refusing to give them food when the men have been away too long and the wives fear they have had a secret affair.

Husbands and wives are strongly united through their children, for both are very fond of their offspring and extremely demonstrative in their affection. To a European, the children are almost intolerable in their demands on their parents and those around them.

As an indication of connubial solidarity, the following is presented. A small child had died and been buried. A day or two after this a camp fight developed only a short distance from the child's grave. The voices of the mother and father could be heard above the din, first pleading with the combatants to stop, and then angrily cursing

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

593 775 15v the people engaged in the trouble because it is believed a spirit of the dead should not be disturbed by fights until after the last mourning ceremony. It was as father and mother that the two protested, but evidently through the child there was a greater bond of solidarity between them.

605 304 When a young dué is circumcised, his near galle cut their thighs "to show their sorrow." A galle always carries her dué's bones after they have been exhumed.

605 *Dué Diramo* ⟷ *Galle Diramo* (father's sister's son ⟷ mother's brother's son)

There are as many variations in the dué-diramo and galle-diramo relationship as in the dué-diramo and galle-mielk type.

[607] This is one of the strongest relationships between men. The actual brothers of ego's wife (who is the daughter of mother's brother) and the consanguine father's sister's son (who is the husband of ego's sister) have the strongest bond of any of the male dué and galle. Each [431] always comes to the other for assistance when he gets into trouble. When a man is giving presents to gawel for gawel's daughter, he also offers them to galle diramo because he is brother to the wife.

When Narnarngo got himself into trouble with Bengaliwe his dué immediately came to his assistance (see page 86). This is only one instance of scores recorded by the writer.

Dué and galle engage in many enterprises together, such as canoe building. The bond between them finds a full expression in all the everyday activities of life. When a man is in trouble and needs a good supply of weapons it is always his brothers, and his dué and galle, who lend him extra spears and clubs, and who come to his assistance.

605 582 Male dué and galle have added strength given to their relationship through indirect ties; dué's son and galle's daughter will later be husband and wife; and galle will later be, or is, gawel to dué's son, just as dué is waku to galle's father. This last relationship is one of the most binding in Murngun society, and by indirect relationship it occurs twice in the reciprocity that exists between galle and dué: dué's son is waku to galle, and dué is waku to galle's father.

605 The full position of dué diramo and galle diramo cannot be realized until one studies the behavior of yeppa and her brother and her position as the wife of dué. The dué's position therefore includes the following relationships: (1) to his wife; (2) to galle's father; and (3) his son's relationship of waku to dué's galle. Every one of these elements

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

For a few days a mother carries her newborn child under her arm in a strip of paper bark. At this time she covers it with charcoal to make it turn black, for it is very light when born and it is thought that it will stay that color unless so painted. In a short time she holds her infant on her shoulder, its legs straddling her neck and its arms clinging to her head. She carries her children out into the bush with her while she gathers the plants, or shell food, for the family larder. When the little boy is about four years old he stays in camp with the other little ones. But the young girls continue going with their mothers, who during this early period start teaching them the countless things they must know about the fauna and flora, the land and the sea, in order to become good food-gatherers. When a boy is to be circumcised the mother always makes presents to the man who paints his body for the ceremony. When the son kills his first kangaroo or emu, the bones are painted and she carries them as she does those of a dead relative. This is to bring the son good luck in the hunt.

If the son's fathers are dead, the mother is sometimes consulted as to the proper time to circumcise him. When the boy returns from his journey to all the local clans, inviting them to come to his circumcision ceremony, it is she who brags about the number of presents given him. She always exaggerates because it is felt that this will also be helpful for the son in acquiring the good things in later life. While he is being circumcised she cries and beats herself. The actions are customary, but they are more than that to the mother, who is deeply affected when she hears her son's cries. The sisters to the mother act in the same way during this ceremony. A mother seldom corrects her child, this being left for mari and nati to do.

When a child is hurt or dead a mother always cuts and beats her head to show her grief. After the child is buried she paints herself with red ocher to cleanse herself of ceremonial impurity so that she can go out for wood and food with the other women. She waits until after burial to paint herself because the body would not decompose if she did it before. After the bones have been prepared for dispersal among the women she is one of the carriers and is usually the first to get them.

The child sees the mother's sisters as arndi not only because they are her sisters but because the father may die and the mother will be transferred to a younger brother of the father, or an older brother may die and his wives will be given to the child's father. In both cases the women would be arndi as wives to the child's father.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

765 of the man's personal basket. A piece of a spear that has been broken
628 off and left in the body of the victim is also used as a relic. When a man has been wounded he sometimes soaks pieces of paper bark in his blood and presents them to his relatives to be used as reminders of their duty to compensate him for his injury by helping him kill or wound a member of the offending man's clan. When a man obtains one of the relics, it is an almost absolute demand on him to kill a member of the slayer's group. This is particularly true if it is given to a young man. The older men usually give their relics to the younger males.

765 The spirit of the dead is supposed to go with the relic, and the relic
778 has magic power. It can be thrown into an intended victim's fire and
789 cause him to go to sleep, or the possessor can blow his breath against it and produce the same effect. It is often carried in the mouth during a battle to make an opponent tired and heavy-footed and to prevent him from dodging spears. Relics play a prominent part in all feuds.

682 Occasionally men are killed within the clan, but this is not a cause for war or retaliation by members of the clan or by near relatives from without the clan. A man may be such a notorious killer and cause so much trouble for his own clansmen that the entire group will kill him to stop further disturbances. At times men are slain by their own
688 clan for breaking ceremonial taboos, such as divulging secrets of the old men to the women or the uninitiated, and for viewing ceremonial objects before their initiation.

672 If a fight is on and a near relative is accidentally hit by a club or
576 spear, the person responsible hits himself on the head while saying he is sorry. Here, too, the underlying idea is to inflict an injury on the responsible person similar to the one the injured party suffered.

152 Military honor also contributes its share to the causes for war. A man
577 will brave the spears of a whole clan to demonstrate his fearlessness. The writer has seen two brothers defy fifteen men in a spear fight. The Murngin people are a brave and courageous group. Fear of death
[676] while in a fight is seldom seen. A man who shows an unwillingness to fight is called a woman and held in extreme contempt.

628 The fundamental principle underlying all the causes of Murngin
681 warfare is that of reciprocity: if a harm has been done to an individual
181 or a group, it is felt by the injured people that they must repay the ones who have harmed them by an injury that at least equals the one they have suffered. When the total cultural situation of Murngin life is
181 further examined, this negative reciprocation is found to fit into a

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

seven by narrup, three by milwerangel, and two by nirimaoi yolno. Although the last is the most frequent type of fight, it seldom results in killings; gaingar, on the other hand, has happened only twice in the last twenty years, yet it has accounted for the deaths of twenty-nine men.

The wooden or stone-headed spear, the spear-thrower and the club, as well as the stone knife, are used in these engagements. The spear is the chief weapon, although in camp fights clubs play a prominent part. The stone axe, which is primarily utilized as an implement, also serves as a weapon. No shield is found here. The Murngin depend on the spear thrower to ward off spears and on their well-developed agility to avoid thrusts. In all fights except the nirimaoi yolno and the narrup, the people coat themselves with war paint of white clay.

Nirimaoi Yolno

Nirimaoi fights are very frequent and are usually the result of quarrels caused by adultery or the husband's belief that someone has been attempting to make him a cuckold. The injured man goes to the camp of the lover and accuses him. He carries a bundle of spears and possibly a club with him. Words follow, swearing starts, and indignation is felt on both sides. Relatives of each contestant help him if the quarrel is felt to be very serious. The women usually attempt to hold the arms of the men to stop the fight from becoming too serious, meanwhile cursing the opponents of their brothers and husbands. At times, however, women pick up their digging sticks or a man's club and help their male relatives; very occasionally a woman is wounded and in certain very rare cases killed.

The nirimaoi yolno fight seldom results in anyone's being killed. Friends of both parties always stand back of the men and hit the spear-throwers or hold them when the fighters attempt to hurl their spears at each other. The contestants usually depend upon this and talk much "harder" (dal) to each other than they would if they knew that they were going to be allowed to have free play at each other. They increase their own sense of importance through the interest of others in their actions and possess a feeling that they are much braver warriors and are filled with a much more intense desire to kill than they would have if no one interfered. By remonstrating with their friends and struggling to get free from them, they are able to vent their outraged emotions and prove to the community that no one can infringe upon their rights without a valiant effort being made to prevent it. Obviously

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

on some occasions there is a certain amount of bluff in the conduct of the contestants. The writer observed one nirimaoi yolno fight when, for some unaccountable reason, the contestants' friends did not attempt to hold them. They had counted on being restrained when they rushed at each other while hurling threats of death and covering each other with obscenity and profanity. When they reached each other no clubs were wielded or spears thrown; the men stood breast to breast and obviously felt a bit ridiculous. The usual results of the nirimaoi yolno are a few bruises, much obscenity, many threats, but few killings.

It must be borne in mind that members of a camp usually come from several clans, or fighting would never take place. Although the clan is undoubtedly involved in this variety of battle, the fight is almost always an individual affair, with a few of the combatants' relatives joining the fray. The nirimaoi yolno is also used as a kind of debate where angry men may air their fancied or actual grievances and state their position in controversial matters. This latter function is very important and is in most cases the primary basis of the nirimaoi yolno.

Narrup or Djawarls

The narrup generally results in someone's being killed or badly injured. It is one of the most deadly forms of Murngin warfare for it occurs at night and by stealth. It is usually conducted by a few individuals who may be members of one clan, or by a party composed of members of one's own clan, the mother's clan, and the wife's group. Such relatives as gawel, waku, dué, galle, bapa, gatu, maraitcha, and marikmo are frequently members of this type of expedition.

The success of the narrup depends upon surprise. A man is usually attacked while sleeping. Warlumbopo's slaying of his brother's killer at Blue Mud Bay, Maiangula's killing of Kamata, and Natjimbui's killing of the Marderpa man in the feud described in this chapter are examples of the narrup night attack.

Although the narrup may be an individual affair, the entire clan is held responsible for the killing. The young men usually attempt to gain the sanction of their elders for a maringo expedition but do not feel they need to for the narrup, which is therefore a favorite fighting method. At times an old man may prefer to remain in the background and have a young man do his killing so that he will not be held as the one primarily responsible, and because of his desire for secrecy the other old men of the clan would not be consulted. The "pusher"

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oll7 Murngin Oll7

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

(b) DEATH AND BURIAL

There are three important events in the life of every male aboriginal of Arnhem Land—in fact, in the life of any tribalized Australian aboriginal—birth, when he leaves the land of the spirits and enters the every-day world; initiation, when he is admitted into the sacred or ritualistic world, where age makes him increasingly important; and death, when he leaves the every-day world, and again enters into the land of the spirits.

Although there are few rituals associated with birth, those of initiation and the later age-grading ceremonies are long and complicated, for it is by these ceremonies that men are admitted deeper and deeper into the secret life of the tribe.

At death, the burial rituals extend over many weeks, their purpose being not only to send the spirit so happily to its future home that it will not be a danger to the living, but also to allow the living to adjust themselves to their loss.

The burial ceremonies at Yirrkalla have three main phases: (i) the ceremonies at death, (ii) the cleansing of the bones, and (iii) the final burial, after which the spirit of the dead leaves for its aboriginal 'heaven'. If the dead are of the *dua* moiety, the spirit goes to Purelko, and if of the *yirtja*, to Nalkuna.

(i) *The Ceremonies at Death*

When a man dies his relatives gather round the dead body, wailing loudly, the women cutting their scalps with sharpened bones until the blood flows freely. After a short period of wailing the men form a group apart from the women and chant the long series of songs which belong to the totemic group of their dead companion. Next morning the men proceed with the rites of burial, first by rubbing red ochre over the body of the corpse, and on that painting his totemic design.[13] The men also make two bark effigies[14] which they put under the arms of the corpse. They explain to him that the effigies are his children, whom they have killed and placed beside him to prevent him being lonely and wishing to return to haunt the living. The corpse is then wrapped in a thick layer of paper-bark and tied with string.

While all this is being done, other men are erecting a platform of logs about five feet in height and covering it with a layer of leaves. Then, while the men chant another series of totemic songs belonging to the dead man, two aborigines

13. This totemic design is the same as that painted on his body during circumcision. See body paintings associated with circumcision, Pl. 128. Warner (1937), pp. 115-16, in his description and interpretation of the mortuary rituals of the Murngin, an adjacent people, records that the totemic design is painted on the body of the dead man so that the spirits, or *Mokoi*, can identify him.

14. Similar to the bark figures, Fig. 65C, D. Frazer (1930), p. 59, records: 'In Tahiti . . . the priest took a number of small slips of plantain leaf-stalk, fixed two or three pieces under each arm of the corpse, placed a few on the breast, and then, addressing the corpse, said, "There are your family, there is your child, there is your wife, there is your father, and there is your mother. Be satisfied yonder (that is, in the world of the spirits). Look not toward those who are left in this world."'

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
OII7 Murngin OII7

Character, Arts and Crafts

Personal Character.

152 522 In personal character these aborigines are light-hearted and happy, with a great fondness for practical joking. Anything which places another in a position of discomfiture is hugely enjoyed. They are quick and rather violent tempered, but on the whole their temper is shortlived.

152 579 A comparatively trifling offence will quickly result in a general disturbance, in which both sexes engage, and during which weapons are brandished and an amazing amount of mutual abuse is indulged in, but usually little serious damage is done, and, having talked themselves out, life soon returns to its normal course.

157 As might be expected, there are some few individuals of a more sullen and anti-social type who become notorious as trouble-makers, and who constitute a difficult problem for their own people. The outstanding weakness of the aborigine's character is his want of a sense of personal responsibility. Rarely does a man act on his own initiative or assume and maintain an individual attitude in regard to any matter.

[157] [182] 614 672 This is undoubtedly accounted for by the fact that in the aboriginal community the unit is not the individual, but the tribal horde. The tribe or group stands or falls together. Every member of it shares in the honour or disgrace of any one of its number. An offence by one member is regarded by another tribe or division as an offence by the whole of the offender's division. All are held as being equally guilty.

614 628 672 In such serious offences as occasion the shedding of blood, the members of the injured tribe or division make no special attempt to avenge themselves upon the individual who has actually committed the offence, but are as well satisfied if they succeed in punishing any member of the party to which he belongs. Though the tribe as a whole may strongly disapprove of the action of one of their number, by which action hostility has been created between them and another tribe, they, knowing they are all involved, must nevertheless stand behind this particular individual.

182 157 614 [672] In this way is the individual relieved of the responsibility of his own actions, and does not personally realise their results EITHER FOR GOOD OR ILL,

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
O117 Murngin O117

Burial and Mourning

Upon the death of a person, especially one of honour and influence, violent expressions of grief are indulged in. The men stand in groups, with spears reversed, with tears streaming down their faces, with the whole body relaxed into a drooping posture, and mournfully chant the death song of their tribe. Meanwhile, the women keep up a dreadful wailing, cut their heads with flints, shells, or sticks until the blood pours down their naked bodies, and throw themselves upon the ground in an utter abandonment of grief. These performances are repeated several times over, especially if fresh parties arrive at the camping ground. 152 763

Before the body is disposed of, there is painted upon it the totemic design of the horde to which the deceased belonged, and to the spirit or totemic centre of which the soul of the departed is believed to return. The body is disposed of either by interment in the ground or by being placed upon a platform constructed for the purpose. 764

In either case, after the body has decomposed, the bones are recovered by male relatives and painted with red ochre. A ceremony is then held, during which the bones are handed over to the female relatives of the deceased, and by them are carried about, sometimes for several years. For this purpose a cylinder of bark is constructed, which is also painted with the person's totemic symbols. Finally, another elaborate ceremony is held, when the bones are broken and deposited in a tall hollow post, which is planted upright in the ground at any convenient place. 765

While the body is awaiting burial, certain near male relatives of the deceased make in the ground a representation of the particular totemic centre, and there ceremonially partake of food, which is known as "Wukandi." None of this food must be given to outsiders, nor must these men partake of food elsewhere. In this way they enter into communion with their departed brother, who is believed to be present with them in these ceremonial meals. 764

Shortly after the disposal of the body, the near relatives of the deceased pass through a purification ceremony, known as "Wontjurr," during which they are washed in a representation of the pool which constitutes the totemic or spirit centre of their 764 783

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

as far as the women in the main camp are officially concerned, are "swallowed by the Snake". Theoretically, they are not supposed to return to the society of women until they are re-born at the end of the Kunapipi. Old men "chase the Snake back" into the sacred ground, where it swallows the initiates; thus they avert the disaster of the whole main camp's being swallowed by Julunggul. This part of the ritual reveals a propitiatory aspect; the initiates "are given" to the Julunggul in order to save the rest of the camp.

Later that night the men return, having left the boys in the protection of their guardians; they tell the women (particularly the initiates' mothers, mothers' sisters and mothers' mothers), "All the young boys have gone to-day; Julunggul has swallowed them up". And the women wail, singing the clan songs of the initiates, as if they were dead. In practice, the women do wail, as they do in the *djunggawon* when the boys are taken out to the sacred ground by the men; but in theory it is said that "the women don't cry, for they might become sick", since Julunggul might be antagonized, thinking the women objected to her methods. "She might return and swallow them too".

On the two following nights, the same events take place: Julunggul comes towards the camp, her voice is heard, and more young initiates are taken out. This continue until all the initiates are collected on the sacred ground; and a sequence of totemic dancing takes place, "teaching" the young boys. Some of this dancing takes place before dawn; intermittent singing and acting continue all night, while the women return the calls of the men from the main camp, or cry out when they hear the hum of the bullroarer. The cry of the women is the cry of the Wauwalak when they saw Julunggul; and when they dance, their dancing is similar to that of the Wauwalak, trying to stop the progress of the Snake. The *jiritja* snake men dance to represent the snakes who watched Julunggul swallowing the Wauwalak. The totemic animals, birds and vegetables that are sung and danced at morning and evening rituals are those seen by the Wauwalak, or collected by them for food. These, it will be remembered, became *mareiin*, sacred, when they left the Wauwalak and joined their ceremonial leader, Julunggul, in Muruwul well.

A little later the men, who have spent part of the evening on the sacred ground, leave this place, and dance with lighted paperbark torches towards the main camp. On their way they meet the women, crouched under conically shaped mats, termed *ngainmara*.[5] Two old women walk up and down, calling out the names of foods which at

5. The *ngainmara*, made of plaited pandanus, is now rarely seen in native camps of this region, having been superseded by blankets. It was once (as mentioned in Chapter I *c*) an important part of a woman's equipment, used for providing shade, for a protection against mosquitoes and sandflies, and for a temporary shelter for a menstruating girl. Symbolically, it represented the uterus, and this aspect is treated in detail in the Djanggawul cycle. (*Vide* R. Berndt, *Djanggawul*, for publication).

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER 2

THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

142 Who are the people of Arnhem Land? What is the pattern of their life, the background against which these events took place?

The physical characteristics of the Australian Aborigines as a whole are well known – their chocolate-brown skin, wavy hair, slightly prognathoid features and rather broad nostrils. The people of the Arnhem Land coast show some differences from those of the immediate inland and of the centre. Food of all kinds is more plentiful, and fresh water easier to find; and so they are rather more solidly built, with heavier legs and broader shoulders than the "desert" natives. Their skin appears to be darker, al- [144] though here and there are lighter individuals who show the influence of part-Malayan or Macassan descent. Generally speak- [152] ing, they are lively and excitable and show emotion more readily 578 than their southern neighbours; all along this coast the tribes have a long history of "blood feuds", kept up between one family and another, or among various clans. They prefer to dispose of their enemies by open killings rather than by the secret work of magical spells – although these too, it is said, are freely employed.

105 Since on this fertile coast the Aborigines do not have to exert themselves quite so strenuously as those in more barren and inhospitable regions, they can devote more time to material culture – to weapons, cave and bark paintings, and a wide range of sacred objects. For this reason, too, we find numbers of clan and tribal groups within a comparatively small area. Tribal territories are more restricted than in the semi-desert areas where men and women must be almost continuously on the move in their search for food.

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

any extent with the visitors, and Professor Lloyd Warner used such statements as a basis for his opinion that the Malay traders did not interfere with native women.[8] But the women themselves offer a different point of view, and so do the songs and stories which have survived to the present day. Men are often unwilling to admit that they themselves, or people of their group, were induced by threats or by liquor to barter their wives and daughters, or that they allowed them to go to the traders because of their ties of friendship and trading relations. Often they attempt to "cover up" the fact that certain people are half or part Macassan, by insisting that their light skin has a spiritual rather than a purely physical explanation. The women, however, are more candid, and many of the older ones among them openly regret the passing of the Indonesian traders. Such an apparent contradiction is not unusual in matters of this kind, when casual liaisons have been carried out over a long period and then brought suddenly to an end through pressure of external circumstances.

The contacts of these Baijini and Indonesian people may have influenced the temperament of the coastal Aborigines, for they are (broadly speaking) more hasty tempered and emotional than the southern and central Aborigines, given to aggressive displays of anger and elementary warfare. The physical effects, however, apart from the infusion of an alien strain in the Aboriginal stock, seem to have been negligible; their indulgence in alcoholic drinks appears to have had no effect upon their general well-being,[9] while venereal diseases are virtually unknown in this eastern region.[10] This contrasts with conditions at Goulburn Island and Oenpelli, in western Arnhem Land, where the prevalence of venereal diseases (especially gonorrhoea) seems to have led to a high incidence of sterility, and so to a declining birth rate. Western Arnhem Land Aborigines have a reputation of being sexually rather lax, whereas various writers have expressed the opinion that the eastern Arnhem Landers are less willing to trade their womenfolk and have consequently been better able to regulate their sexual relations with "outside" people. Actually this impression seems to have its origin in the fact that the sexual pattern of both societies shows certain differences. The one is

MORE RARELY, RESPONSIBILITY FOR FEED-
[465] ing the canoe-maker is assured by the man for whom the
396 work is undertaken. He is paid finally in *gerri*, such as bundles
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437 of spears, baskets and tomahawks, which again take the form of "goodwill" (*ŋoi ŋämmatirri*) presents rather than payments calculated on the basis of exact economic equivalence. In these transactions, a bargain is rarely struck; the *djärtunmirri* is flattered by the request for his services to cut the canoe, and the *buŋgauwa lippa lippa*, the owner or master of the canoe, seeks to please the craftsman by making liberal gifts to ensure that the *djärtunmirri* is satisfied at
[152] the end of the transaction. For he knows that a man who
[578] harbours resentment will rarely declare this openly, but
[754] that he is likely to brood over it and eventually to seek the aid of a medicine man or sorcerer to avenge the wrong, real or imaginary. Even in this case, to which the name *mälli* is applied, the transaction is far removed from the level of simple purchase. But a big advance has been made in the recognition of craft specialisation and the idea of payment for the work of the specialist.

313 The responsibility of the owner, *buŋgauwa* (literally
396 master) of the canoe, does not end here. A suitable canoe tree is hard to find and he may be obliged to select a tree some distance from river or sea, and to manhandle the heavy craft on rollers cut for the purpose.

431 The handling and launching of a new canoe is a big
476 ceremonial occasion, and in consequence, a presentation of
396 food is expected of the *buŋgauwa* as a gesture of goodwill to those who assist in the launching of the craft. This again entails work and organisation, and above all, the co-operation of numbers of people, including women, with divergent interests, the whole forming part of an intricate and nicely balanced system of obligation and counter obligation, of gift and counter gift.

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

159 the English Company Island, people who still remembered how to do it
[501] (pages 459-460). Some of the people came out to our boat by lying on a large log and paddling with their hands and feet. I got in the dinghy and went ashore with some of the people on the boat. When my mari saw me
[152] he cried and cried. Some people are like that among us black men. We cry when we meet people just as we cry sometimes when we tell them goodbye. I tried to talk to him, but I couldn't say anything. It was just the same as if I had lost my language. I had to talk to him in the sign language. I felt very foolish. I brought flour with me, but they did not know what it was.
[252] They cooked flour in paper bark just like they did palm tree flour.
[609] All the people were very angry with the white man for keeping me away so long, and some of them sneaked out in the bush and got their spears and clubs and were going to kill the white man. I said no, that it was no good. I said, "The white men talk very hard and sometimes they swear at you, but inside they are all right. Sometimes when they swear, they mean
[439] good." While we were there I got my people to make gifts of turtle shell and pearl to the white man, and he gave them hatchets and knives and calico. I got in the boat and started to go back to Port Darwin with the white man. Cape Don Tommy and the white man quarreled when we got to Croker Island because Cape Don Tommy wanted to sleep on shore. We got out at Croker Island and went by canoe to Cape Don. There I met that girl again, but her husband was there then. We went on to Port Darwin for a moon and came back to Elcho Island. Once more I went into the bush and stayed.

His Wives and Their Parents

159 Black men walk about single and by themselves. At first they have no
581 mates. By and by they find one that belongs to them. By and by children
828 come. White men walk about by themselves. By and by they find a woman,
825 and more children come out. The Macassar man was all the same.

Big old man kangaroo walks about single and by himself. By and by he catches his woman, and then there are little kangaroos. Opossum and fly and bandicoot—they are all the same.

Python catches his mate and by and by there are eggs, then there are children. Frilled-neck lizard, native companion, honeybees, pigeon, hawk-billed turtle, and all those animals—they are just the same.

Black men cut down trees and by and by little ones come up. Everywhere and all the time it is always the same. Walk around single, by and by a mate, and by and by children. There is an inside meaning to this. Some of
159 us old men who are not fools understand. If those two Wawilak creator
581 sisters had not done wrong in their own country and fornicated with those
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10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

I called to Mahkarolla, "What shall we do?" He said nothing. He did not so much as glance back. I called his name. He paid no attention. I wondered if he were sulking. This seemed unlike him, but most Murngin occasionally sulk and I wondered if he might feel that I had brought him into this very dangerous situation and blame me for it. With the foolish hope that it might be possible for us to get back to safety, I yelled again and asked if it were necessary for us to go on. He ignored me. After several more futile attempts to get his attention and some profane comment I subsided. There was complete silence in the boat.

Hours went by. Everyone remained quiet. I felt isolated and alone. The sun had gone down behind a bank of red clouds. In many of the Murngin ceremonies red clouds are a symbol of the end of things. The sea had turned blood red, ugly and morbid.

Darkness came, and with the night the waves quieted and the wind lessened. About midnight we came to a desert island lying a few hundred yards off the shore. The island was formed like a semicircular hill with one small beach at the bend. We saw a campfire on the beach and were afraid to land because the coastal and bush peoples had been fighting. Marauding bands from the interior had been coming down to the coastal country. We drew closer and discovered the party to be Murngin—the other canoe had landed safely.

Everything I had with me was soaked through except my camera and photographic material which, fortunately, were in waterproof bags. Mahkarolla and I with the others sat by the fire to dry and warm ourselves. We dried out enough tobacco to have a smoke. Mahkarolla turned to me and then said, "I am very sorry I did not answer you when you called to me, Bungawa. I could not because I was crying too much. I was afraid you were going to lose your life. I thought those waves were going to tip our canoe over and you would die. I am very sorry."

I tried to answer him. All my words seemed inadequate. However, even in my shame I knew he understood my feelings because he had once said that when white men swore they did not mean what they said. After we had had some food and what little water was left in my canteen we hovered around the fire and went to sleep.

When I left the Murngin country I took the mission lugger from the Crocodile Islands to Port Darwin to get the boat to Sydney. Mahkarolla came with me. I had to wait ten days for the boat and during this time he and I were together a good part of each day. When the boat came in Mahkarolla helped me aboard with my luggage and scientific equipment. Then my white friends in Darwin came aboard for a farewell whiskey and

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

soda. Natives were not allowed to stay on board. When I realized we were about to sail I rushed out to find Mahkarolla. The pier was filled with Darwin whites who were there to feel in touch with the homeland. Out at the far corner of the crowd I saw Mahkarolla. He was standing still, his head bent down. I waved but he did not reply. I called to him but received no answer. There came to my mind the memory of the storm at sea when he thought I was going to lose my life. Our parting now had death in it, too, because it was certain that we would never see each other again. I hurried down to the other end of the boat to be nearer him to try to attract his attention. The whisle blew and we started to leave the pier. I called again. Mahkarolla looked up, waved, then lowered his head again. He was crying. That was the last time I saw him.

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or medicine-men. Members of the one, whose operations are wholly of an evil character, are known as *ragalk*, while members of the other, whose operations are always of a benign character, are known as *marrngit*, or less frequently *gulang*.'

This statement needs qualification, for the cults of the medicineman or *marrngit* and the sorcerer or *kalka* in Arnhem Land are not quite as simple as suggested in this account, and the *marrngitmirri*—that is, the medicineman, the man who has been initiated and adopted by spirit familiars called *marrngit* who help him in the practice of his cult—really belongs to east Arnhem Land, and to the territory east of the Crocodile Islands, coinciding with the area that lacks a typical tribal organization. The somewhat different cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka*, the sorcerer, flourishes at Cape Stewart and to the south and west of this territory. Its stronghold is central and western Arnhem Land. Here, in the territory of the Burara tribe of Cape Stewart which lies immediately west of the Crocodile Group, and among Raimbar'ngo, Ritar'ngo and other tribes of central Arnhem Land, the cult of the *ragalk* flourishes. An informant of Wanguri clan who was linked by his totemic background with the Wallamango declared that the cult of the *marrngit* did occur in the neighbouring Burara tribe. But the account given by this man was not impartial and unavoidably gave to the *marrngit* of that area a kind of 'aura' of the *kalka* or sorcerer.

It will be clear from what I have said that the two cults are not complementary, except possibly in the Burara tribe. And in east Arnhem Land they certainly do not exist side by side as opposing cults among the same people, as the Revd. T. T. Webb's account implies. The sorcerer or *kalka*, although certainly known to the people east of the Crocodile Islands who live in the stronghold of the *marrngitmirri*, and much feared by them as part of the magical stock-in-trade of the *warnba*, the people of the west (strangers) does not exist as a cult in eastern Arnhem Land. The fear in which the sorcerer is held by these people resulted from the transfer of the Methodist Mission from Elcho Island, where it was first established, to Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands—which, by coincidence, lies on the western fringe of the territory of the Burara, the very home of the *kalk*'.

The present paper is intended to give an account of the *marrngitmirri* and their *marrngit* and particularly to describe the way in which a man of east Arnhem Land is visited by his *marrngit* and initiated as a 'medicineman,' the relationship that exists between the *marrngitmirri* and his *marrngit* or spirit familiars, and the way in which his *marrngit* or spirit familiars test the medicineman before they adopt him.

The coloured plates (I, J) that accompany the paper, as I have stated, represent the *marrngit* drawn by three medicinemen of east Arnhem Land. The descriptions with the plates are translations of the information given to me by the medicinemen themselves, generally in their own languages.

The Kalka *and* Ragalk

After I had been working for about two years in eastern Arnhem Land and knew the language well enough to

797 speaking groups of Elcho Island, the Glyde and Goyder
754 Rivers on the west, and eastwards around Buckingham,
[177 Arnhem and Melville Bays, to Cape Arnhem and Port
184] Bradshaw and south to Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, had little actual experience of the sinister cult of the *kalka*. But when the Methodist Mission moved from Elcho Island to the Crocodile Group and set up its headquarters at Milingimbi, an island lying a short distance off the coast, it brought the people who had accompanied the Mission into the very stronghold of a form of secret killing or sorcery that was strange to them. On this account they
609 came to regard the people of the west—whom they called
186 *warnba*, strangers—with fear and suspicion, and they have been more or less at loggerheads with them ever since,
[152] resulting in frequent blood feuds, and a considerable loss of life.

For years it was the practice of the natives who had moved from their own countries to the island of Milingimbi, into what was to them foreign and hostile territory, to discourage visits of the local people by acts of aggression and violence, depending on the Mission to protect them from reprisals.

797 Mr. Webb, who was in charge of the Methodist Mission
728 in the Crocodile Islands, once informed me, when I was at Milingimbi during a brief respite from patrols on the
722 mainland of Arnhem Land, that in the early days of the Mission there he had once, to maintain peace, bought all their fighting spears from the natives, but that when an attack from the mainland was reported to be imminent he had had to re-issue these—though in actual fact the attack
609 did not occur.
186 As often occurs when a people are brought into contact with those of a different culture, the natives from the east tended to exaggerate traits of the Burara that they regarded
[592] as undesirable and often told me ribald stories stressing the misdeeds of their neighbours. After a long recital of the faults of the Burara, whom he stigmatized as *warnba*, one informant remarked by way of special emphasis, '*yappa lukka!*'—they cohabit with their sisters. The brother-sister
[835 tabu is rigidly enforced in east Arnhem Land. Even to
684] mention the name of a woman in the presence of her brother is a grave ritual offence, called *mirriri*, and brother-sister incest is a crime for which there is no expiation, punished by the death of both parties.

582 The charge of incest against the Burara may owe its
835 origin to the fact that these people, unlike their neighbours to the east, had a normal tribal organization, which meant that members of clans of opposite moieties within the tribe and of the appropriate kinship status could marry, since the tribe is not exogamous. Because people between
582 whom marriage was permitted were actually members of
835 the same tribe, the practice would suggest incest to their
152 neighbours of the east, already fearful of the magic of their *kalka* and ready to attribute to these people practices that
186 were to them anti-social and unnatural. This attitude of the Elcho Island people was well shown by the fact that they charged their neighbours with cannibalism and said of
[266] them '*nganak lukka*'—they eat flesh (human)—overlooking the fact that they themselves also practised a form of ritual

[p. 99(A)]

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cannibalism which they regarded as indispensable to a hunter in order to maintain his prowess at a level that could earn for him the coveted title of *tjambait*.

During much of the time—amounting to several years—that I lived in Arnhem Land I hunted with groups of the status of horde, which often claimed one or more *marngitmirri*. I frequently saw these men practising their cult, and was able to make a detailed study of both *marngitmirri* and *kalka* while I lived a nomadic life with these people.

Kalka *and* Marngit

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The cult of the *ragalk* or *kalka—kalk'* of the Burara—, to which I have referred, is believed to be used to bring about the death of a man who has been made a scapegoat—frequently by a rite of augury—for the death of a member of an enemy horde. Often the victim will be a man against whom the deceased or his group have harboured a grievance of long standing, perhaps because he has failed to honour some payment such as that obligatory to one who has been present at a *ngarra*—or clan totem—ceremony, to make a ceremonial presentation of *ngata*, food (really vegetable food), or of *gerri*, goods, valuables, to the elders of this clan. Of this obligation they say 'to pay back that *marr*'—to propitiate the *malli* of the culture hero whose totem is involved. This *ngata* and the *gerri* presented by men who have attended the *ngarra* by invitation, are dedicated to the *wangarr* and are said to be *yarkomirri*, *i.e.* sacramental. Failure to discharge the obligation to make expiatory payments of the kind that I have mentioned places a man in danger of death by magic, even after a long period of time.

[688 689] [776 782]

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In Arnhem Land the belief is held that the death of any person in full possession of his social personality is due, not to what the white man terms 'natural causes' but to the act of an enemy, often a person who is believed to bear a grudge, real or imaginary, against the deceased. Even death from sickness or drowning, from attack by shark or crocodile, and especially from snake bite, is not regarded as the primary cause, but merely the agent used by an enemy, or by a *ragalk* whose aid he has enlisted, to bring this about. The only exception to the belief about natural death is extreme old age, when, in the words of one of my informants, the people say 'time belong him now'—his time is spent, he has lived his life. Certain types of swellings and deformities are believed to result from ritual visitation or punishment by the *wangarr*, the totemic ancestors, for the violation, even accidental or inadvertent, of a tabu, particularly on the eating of foods which are prohibited at certain critical stages in a man or woman's relation to his family or horde, as at initiation, on the death of near kin, or during pregnancy. Boils of a type distinguished as *marlung* are believed to be due to ritual punishment and so held as proof of the violation of a tabu, usually on the eating of food that is *duyu* (tabu) at critical stages in a man's life.

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A man in east Arnhem Land named Nyarrang pointed to a large tumour on his neck and told me that it was due to the *malli birlma—i.e.* a blow from the 'shade' or spirit of an implement called *birlma*—used today as a mallet or hammer in food-preparation by women, and 'found'

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776 originally by the Djangauwo sisters—women culture
[773] heroes, who, in their progress across east Arnhem Land, thrust their yam sticks into the ground as they walked. From each of the holes caused in this way there gushed a spring of water of a special kind called *milmindjarrk*. Certain tabus restrict the drinking of *milmindjarrk* water and my informant Nyarrang declared that the swelling on his neck was due to ritual punishment in the form of a blow from the *malli* of the heavy *birlma*, used by the Djangauwo sisters whose spirits still preside over *milmindjarrk* waters. Some time later, the effect of the blow from the *malli birlma* had become manifest in the form of a swelling. It is characteristic of these people that when 'something is wrong,' when they receive a warning in the
[787] form of an omen or portent, or when 'bad luck' attends their hunting or fishing expeditions, they look back over their lives for some incident which has caused them
● [152] uneasiness or concern and which they feel may have incurred the displeasure of the *malli wangarr*, the spirits of the ancestral culture heroes.

756 The role of the *marrngitmirri* is twofold: first, to diagnose sickness or to determine the cause of death, and secondly
[776] to find a scapegoat by the aid of his *marrngit*—who, being
[787] spirits or ghosts, possess occult powers, powers to see things not visible to mortals, which they communicate to the *marrngitmirri*, who in turn passes the information to the kin of the victim. As a rule the verdict of the *marrngitmirri*
[682 is accepted without question and the people proceed to
593] select an avenger. This will be a person within the kinship horizon of the deceased—sometimes a younger brother but often a more distant relation from a clan to which, under an extension of the kinship structure, he has special obligations, which may be reciprocal.

In the marginal area adjacent to the Burara, *i.e.* close to
[754] the territorial stronghold of the *ragalk*—the *marrngitmirri* looks at once for signs of the tell-tale magic of the dreaded *kalka*, just as a man does when seeking the reason for what he accepts as ritual punishment.

754 Even in the culturally homogeneous area of north-east
756 Arnhem Land, the beliefs and ideas about the *marrngit* and
114 *marrngitmirri*, as well as about *ragalk*, vary considerably—necessarily so, in a matter which is strongly subjective. The foregoing reference to the role of the *marrngitmirri* discounts Webb's statement (*loc. cit.*) that this man 'possesses no special influence in the life of his horde or tribe.' It must be apparent that at critical times, when the sentiments of the
[753 kin of a sick or newly deceased man are aroused as they
761] are by the pronouncements of the *marrngitmirri* (which, backed by belief in his *marrngit*, are accepted without question), his influence on the horde in which he lives is one of life and death.

The Kalka *at Work*

754 The *kalka* or sorcerer is believed to be responsible for
753 bringing about the sickness and ultimate death of his
761 victim but he does not profess to diagnose sickness or injury due to magic, which is the role only of the *marrngit*. In practice, *kalka* may operate singly but more generally they work in groups of two or three. A sorcerer is likely

754 unaware of what has happened to him, but they assert that because of their magic he is unable to tell of his experiences when he returns to camp, although he knows that he is doomed, and prepares to die.

After a more or less prolonged treatment to restore the victim and to cover external evidence of his work, particularly in obliterating the tracks to the place where the body lay, the *kalka* wraps leaves—any leaves—around the hook of the spear-thrower and waves it over the prostrate body of his victim, especially over his head. The victim stirs. My informant simulated the groans and grunts of a man awakening from a heavy sleep.

As he recovers consciousness, the victim thinks 'I have slept deeply.' He thinks 'I have slept too much.' Meanwhile the *ragalk* has hidden himself behind a tree.

'I think somebody has killed me,' *i.e.* worked magic. The *kalka* now springs out from behind the tree and frightens his victim, telling him that he is doomed and that he will die. The victim recognizes the *kalka* and threatens to kill him. He hooks his spear on his spear-thrower but he misses again and again. He has lost heart. He returns to camp, intending to tell his kin what has happened so that they can avenge him. The *kalka*, joined now by his confederates, waylays the victim, and again harries and intimidates him. The man returns to camp but is unable to tell what has happened to him. In two or three days he [152] falls sick. He feels cold and lies all the time close to a fire. He is resigned to his fate and calling his kin around him he says, 'I am going to finish' (I am going to die).

756 The people, who jump to conclusions, ready to see the *kalka*'s work, call on the *marrngitmirri* who holds him tightly, examining his body. He sees sores—the *malli* of the wounds made by the *kandjurma*—and he sees that the heart blood has been drained. If the *marrngitmirri* is not sure, not ready to accept responsibility for his diagnosis, [776] he will call in others of his cult, or he will wait until evening, when his *marrngit* return to him. These often leave the medicinemen during the day and return to them at night. The *marrngit* sit on his shoulders or in the *matji-tji* [145] (biting bag), a net basket made from strings and filled tightly with down feathers or with down (*ramman*). The *matji-tji* is slung around the neck and hangs down on the chest by a string. It is carried by men during formal ordeals called *makarratta*, and when fighting in single combat, when they put it in their mouths and clamp their teeth on it. *Matji-tji* are often worn by *marrngitmirri* and provide a place of refuge for their *marrngit*. The *marrngitmirri*, after initiation to the cult, is able to see his *marrngit* and talk to them. The people living in the same camp, although unable to see the *marrngit*, claim that they can hear the *kaindjarr*—the sound of swift motion—caused by their wings, or more accurately, since not all use wings as motive power, the sound of motion. The *marrngitmirri* [774 761] claim to be able to detect the work of *ragalk*, but not to heal their victims, because their heart blood has been [776 787] drained, the *birimbir* has departed and their internal organs injured or removed.

In the years that I lived with the natives in Arnhem Land I frequently saw the *marrngitmirri* at work. He claims

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

755 collecting shellfish, and to cure the child he had pummelled the stomach, subduing the parasite and sucking it out in an invisible form.

[164] A persistent epidemic of dysentery was making its way through the Yirrkala camp, and in desperation I finally dosed the two hundred occupants with castor oil, had all shelters burnt and a new camp made on the opposite side of the creek. There were no further applications for medicine, which suggested that everyone had recovered, and upon inquiry I was complacently told that there could be no further sickness, for on the night following the castor oil episode, the marrnggit had conducted a magical 'sing' and had put a spell on the mischievous spirit that had caused the trouble.

164 Aboriginal stamina in privation and suffering is pro-
● 152 verbial, and the wounded exhibit stoicism and endurance beyond belief. Usually the only indication of suffering is in the flexing of muscles and the rolling of the head. Internal complaints, pains, and epidemics are much more likely to prove fatal, for they cannot be seen as can an open wound.
753 Imagination plays a big part with internal troubles, and the victim, thinking he is under an evil spell, prepares to die.

825 Yulengor have great fear of venomous snakes, and to show their contempt for non-venomous and edible varieties they insert the head upside down between their teeth and dislocate the vertebrae by jerking down with their hands. In Arnhem Land there are two varieties of venomous brown snakes in addition to the death-adder; although they are not as numerous as might be expected, they are by no means uncommon. One afternoon when I was burning a fire-break round an eight-acre paddock I killed seven death-adders.
752 Snake-bite can only be treated by first capturing the snake.
755 A forked stick is held behind its head and is later replaced
825 by the string by which it is suspended from a tree. On no account must the snake be killed, for if it is even injured the

15:Chaseling M-S (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

752 painfully when a limb is stung. They apply a counter-irritant in the form of a string ligature above and below the wound. Further treatment is given by lighting a fire on wet sand and applying the heated sand to the spot. A third popular theory is to catch the scorpion and squeeze its body juices over the wound.

[136] Stingrays in warm northern waters vary in size from twelve inches in diameter to several feet. I well remember the night when we were two miles off-shore in a canoe and were startled by the splash of a huge black monster surging from the sea some twenty or thirty yards away. Waves from its crash tossed the canoe, and the boys did not allow closer inspection, but madly plied their paddles, for fear of an attack. A wound from an ordinary stingray is extremely painful, and I have known the poisoned barb to be driven through the thickest part of a man's hand. A black wood-
[825] beetle, like a cockroach, forms the basis of the cure, and is squeezed into the wound; later, several of the beetles are pulped and plastered over it. In serious cases the plaster is mixed with the crushed tubers of a trailing vine from the sand-dunes. Simpler and speedier relief is obtained by applying hot moist sand.

[136] The Portuguese man-o'-war is well named, and is the
[165] worst variety of jellyfish in the Arafura Sea. It has caused the deaths of many children. Youths normally able to bear
[152] excruciating pain fall on the beach and scream in agony after brushing against a Portuguese man-o'-war. Its long trailing feeler, invisible in sea-water, carries many small cells charged with poison darts on springs. Delicate triggers hold these in position, so that once the feeler touches an object, the triggers automatically release their paralysing darts. Small fish are paralysed and drawn up to be consumed. Feelers can be quickly rubbed off the body with sand, and probably the Yulengor treatment of applying hot sand does this and also affords some slight relief.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER TWELVE

Aboriginal Temperament

ABORIGINES are light-hearted and enjoy fun and laugther. Youths are for ever sky-larking and playing practical jokes, and in ceremonial pantomimes the men spend a lot of time singing, dancing, and mimicking birds and animals. Intense joy is also expressed through prolonged wailing, when women rhythmically pound their heads with sharp stones and spear-heads till the blood flows freely.

Emotions lie close to the surface and without warning aborigines run through the gamut of them all. Some seem to be always weeping or wailing, but it would be wrong to imagine that they are a mournful or disconsolate race. To feel lonely for a son or daughter, temporarily in another part of the country, is enough to start a 'wail'. Others awake and join in for an hour or more before subsiding into sleep. When a family leaves camp the relatives will wail in loneliness for several nights, and so frequent are these wails that little attention is paid to them by the rest of the camp.

Twelve months after we landed at Yirrkala, the three boys who had been arrested and jailed in Darwin for their part in the Japanese killings in Caledon Bay were repatriated to Yirrkala. Relatives surrounded them on the beach and took them to the camp, where they all sat in an uneasy silence till the women, overcome with joy, started to wail. Everyone joined in, and the deep passionate baritone cries of the old man and father of the horde throbbed through the wailing chorus of his sons' and sons' sons' families. Their welcome continued till dawn, with crying and blood-letting interspersed with camp-songs and dances.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

YULENGOR

828 827 Stone Age man believes that his emotions are seated in his stomach, and his names for anger, fear, jealousy, and the rest, are descriptive of the changes that take place in the stomach in generating emotion. They make no distinction between anger, indignation, and jealousy; they are known as 'ngoi-mari-buna' ('ngoi' referring to underneath or the foundation), meaning the stomach boils.

[578] A man who refuses to support his relative in a quarrel is called 'ngoi kapumiri'; that is, he has a watery stomach (or as we should say in English 'no guts').

Pleasure, joy, and happiness are dependent on the stomach, which subsides into a peaceful calm on hearing welcome news. It was explained that when a man sees an enemy approaching, his stomach boils and his anger rises, but if the enemy says he has come to make peace, the man's anger disappears and his stomach subsides into a flat calm 'like the sea after a storm'; he has 'the wind taken out of his sails'.

Sorrow and regret also rise from the stomach. Fear comes from the same source, and rises and swells in the throat; Stone Age man also knows something about his 'heart in his mouth'.

[593] Love is dependent on the stomach, and the affection of a father for his son, or the devotion of mothers for their children, boils from the depths. I was reminded of the ageless biblical story of Joseph's meeting his treacherous half-brothers after many years; he was speechless, 'For his bowels did yearn for his (youngest) brother'.

• 152 It has often been suggested that aborigines have not the same highly developed affection for each other as white people, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Devotion is genuine, and intimate, and is openly expressed on scores of occasions which in a white community would call for little more than passing sympathy. The first initiation 304 881 in a boy's life reaches its climax in circumcision, when wide- [302] spread emotion is expressed. Women, girls, and children

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

of the hordes sit apprehensively under shady trees whilst the men paint intricate totemic designs on the initiates. More often than not several hordes meet for the occasion, and all the boys between eight and ten years of age are prepared by relatives. Armlets, dilly-bags and trinkets are hung around their necks for decorative purposes, and sometimes they carry a knife or steel tomahawk. When their moment arrives, the boys are brought to the ceremonial ground, and the men dance and sing with increasing emotion, till at last they bunch together and with kindly reluctant movements force each boy into the arms of a crouching man who supports and holds him. Women relatives close in and dance around the tightly packed circle and wail in rising agitation, others gash their heads, and girl playmates of the initiates cry amongst the trees and cut their breasts with sharp shells. An invitation is often extended to a visiting Yulengor to perform the actual operation, which is frequently prolonged by the use of a stone knife or spearhead. The loud purposeful calls of the men seldom drown the cries of the victim. It is then that a wave of emotion sweeps over the entire camp.

When a nomad is sick the relatives will crouch tightly around him, and their excessively mournful sympathy is conducive to moans and vapours from the patient. Eye-rolling and groans will accompany even simple sprains and abdominal pains and inspire sympathetic cries and wails. At the approach of death, the next of kin draw near pathetically brushing flies from the patient, attempting to sustain warmth with sheets of paper-bark, but unwittingly stifling him in a turgid atmosphere. There are wails and shrieks if continuous movement is not seen from some part of the body. Commotion at death is indescribable; women deliberately hurl themselves on the ground with loud cries, and they wail loudly and tremulously as they stab their heads with sharp stones and shells.

Egyptians preserved mummified bodies in pyramids,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

remains of national heroes are enshrined in notable monuments, a lock of hair is treasured, and thousands of square miles have been given over to fields of grave-stones. But the Arnhem Land nomad preserves a memento of his dead by carrying the skeleton in a bark parcel. It is a pitiful gesture of affection, but the custom is not without ingenuity, for having no settled camp the nomad carries all his possessions with him. The bones of the largest skeletons are neatly wrapped in bark; they weigh only a few pounds, need no treatment, and are practically indestructible. In large camps it is an everyday occurrence for some mother to bring out the bones of a child and wail over them in company with other female relatives.

Stone Age temperament is established in childhood. Nomads unwittingly foster the nervous and emotional characteristics in their children, who are spoiled and pampered even to the age of ten. Every whim is met, and mothers go to endless discomfort to fulfil their children's dictatorial demands. A woman returns to camp after a hard day's foraging; she is loaded with firewood, water, and food, and she also carries a child of four or five years of age until she is within a hundred yards or so of camp, when she exhaustedly puts him down to walk beside her. But instead of following her he throws himself on the ground, kicking and screaming tearlessly, till the mother's resolve is broken and she returns to bring him in. A favourite habit in soothing whimpering infants is to caress and pet their genital organs till fitful slumber claims them.

Primitive emotion is thinly veiled. Thoughts, desires, and feelings that are suppressed or camouflaged in civilized society are in aboriginal life given free play; they lie open for inspection and are accepted as natural phenomena. This unrestrained emotion does much to account for the frequent and unexpected changes in the Stone Age man's attitude, and for his alleged treachery.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

ABORIGINAL TEMPERAMENT

Men of the Reratjingo horde one day met two Kalpu youths with feigned friendliness, for both hordes shared the same totem and had other interests in common. But, unbeknown to the Kalpu youths, a Reratjingo man had recently died and his death had been attributed to Kalpu magic. Both parties sat on the beach, and most of the Reratjingo men drew away, with studied insouciance, ostensibly to hunt, leaving two of their number to entertain the Kalpu youths. A plan for revenge was then hatched by the Reratjingo, and as they came back, they signalled to their two accomplices to spear the Kalpu men. As they drove in their spears the others rushed in and completed the massacre. Mortally wounded, the Kalpu victims asked and were told why they had been attacked. They protested that they knew nothing of the death-by-magic, and bore no ill-will toward the dead man or his horde; whereupon the killers to a man expressed genuine sorrow and regret for the attack. They commiserated to such an extent that their victims implored them to end their misery, and they obligingly did so.

In the early days at Yirrkala some boys and their dogs went to fish at Melville Bay, twelve miles away, and in the evening when the dogs returned without the boys, a prolonged wailing and commotion broke out in the camp and fighting spears were produced and brandished. I asked what it was all about, and was told that because the dogs had come back alone it was surmised that the boys had been ambushed and speared. Fighting men were noisily preparing to go after the hypothetical enemy until I suggested that the dogs could have come back for something to eat, and that possibly the boys had camped at the bay. The men agreed to wait until morning, and then the boys came home! It is hard to say what would have happened if they had gone out at night searching for enemies, but at least this much is certain—they would have satiated their emotions by

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

152 628 spearing any wandering nomad they may have chanced upon.

578 Camp quarrels are fiery and frequent, and everyone joins in on the slightest provocation. An imaginary slight, perhaps a small irregularity in food distribution, or the frequently [589] organized female attempts to annoy a bachelor by accusing him of making advances to married women, are enough to arouse resentment and inflame the emotions. Physical violence is usually preceded by a noisy battle of wit and the 578 exchange of abuse. Over forty commonly used abusive 195 epithets range from ingenious and witty references to male and female genital abnormalities to the calling into question of the integrity of parents, as well as that of future generations. It is also common to threaten to leave a man's bones to rot in the grave instead of removing them for decent [765] burial in a burying post; the formal curse is: 'May your bones rot before they can be lifted for interment.'

Every possible, impossible, and imaginary physical irregularity, ranging from the ludicrous to the obscene, is applied to the genital organs of both sexes, and all the references are shouted in the open camp. A favourite obscene remark is that an opponent's eyes, ears, and mouth are filled with placenta; a short abusive term accuses a woman of harlotry and describes fantastic intimacies on her part, whilst a man can have similar cryptic charges hurled at him.

Milder references are made to big eyes, knees, elbows, and sunken eyes; bones are said to be solid and lifeless like stone, and eyes and ears are described as blunt. Minor scornful phrases used by mothers to children include the impatient exclamation: 'Your fingers are thumbs'; arms and legs are said to be awkwardly long, the neck to be short, the head to be sitting on the shoulders.

578 Despite his emotional temperament, Stone Age man has artificial methods of arousing a display of temper. If he feels that he has been slighted and wishes to vent his grievances,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OII7 Murngin OII7

relatives and friends is a matter of amusement. It is only possible to die once, and in the ageless wandering through the unbroken round of day and night, the Stone Age fatalist finds his highest form of excitement in continuing a feud, in raiding other hordes, and in other forms of violence, such as capturing women from another man—in itself a profitable pastime. A general raid is the *pièce de résistance*.

Nevertheless I found nomads to be happy and cheerful; they bear pain and disappointment and face death with extraordinary courage. Resilient natures find humour in a mundane primeval world, and they are always on the look-out for something to laugh at—even to the extent of being amused at the contortions of an expiring enemy or at a healthy man's imitation of physical disabilities in another. Youths and men are convulsed with laughter at the antics of a man aping the gait of a leper, and at the uncertain gropings of the partially blind. Jokes are very simple, and the average is no better than a jealous remark about an old man negotiating for youthful wives: 'He must be a turtle', the reference being to the fact that a turtle usually lays several dozen eggs.

Under all this rank growth of primitive emotion lie the roots of qualities we value most in civilized man; such as courage, kindliness, devotion, and honesty. Stone Age man is ordinarily well intentioned toward the welfare of any white man or alien stranded in the bush, and countless stories are told of their rescue of them. In such circumstances they treat them as privileged invalids, and except when bad impressions have been made by previous visitors, they are accepted at face-value. If they act as gentlemen they are treated as such; but if they abuse the hospitality of their hosts, and attempt to rape the women, as has frequently happened, they are exterminated by the only law known to the nomad.

It is impossible to walk through the bush and not notice